

and I certainly support Senator GRASSLEY in his efforts to move this bill forward.

LOUISIANA REQUEST FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, over the past several weeks the senior Senator from Louisiana, Senator BREAUX, and I have expressed grave concerns about the pending economic crisis that Louisiana and other Southern states face as a result of the worst drought in Louisiana and the South's history. Earlier this week, more disturbing information was brought to our attention by Terry Smith, a second generation farmer, cotton gin manager and marketing consultant from Jonesville, Louisiana who testified before a hearing called by Senator DASCHLE on the farm crisis. The plea by Mr. Smith and others in Louisiana is a wake up call. If the Congress fails to respond to the natural disaster crisis in the South for this crop year, not only will farmers be forced into bankruptcy, but banks, hundreds of small businesses and the rural economy that is supported by the agriculture industry will suffer greatly.

Mr. President, Louisiana began the year with record rainfall during the Winter and early Spring followed by the hottest Summer on record. Just during the last three months, Louisiana has had 71 days of 97 degree or higher temperatures with 36 days higher than 100 degrees. Things are not looking any better and we are told that with the past and current extreme weather conditions the current loss estimates of \$450 million are expected to increase even more during the coming weeks. This is not good news especially for Louisiana corn, cotton, soybean and livestock producers in North Louisiana who have been hit hardest.

To explain the difficulties that Louisiana farmers are experiencing I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of the high points of Terry's remarks. His recent statement very clearly tells the story of the projected impact this natural disaster has had on thousands of family farms and the future economy of some of the poorest areas in Louisiana. Specifically, his testimony focuses on the economic losses projected for Louisiana's major row crops—corn, cotton and soybeans.

Mr. President, corn farmers in Louisiana under normal weather patterns are able to produce about 100–200 bushels per acre for non-irrigated corn. To date, the best corn yields in Louisiana have been in the 40–50 bushel per acre range. In addition, a large percentage of Louisiana's corn crop is infested with aflatoxin, a toxic mold that results from heat stress and is harmful to humans and animals at certain levels. Due to the toxic nature of this mold, corn harvested with aflatoxin in excess of 20 parts per billion can not be sold to most grain elevators. The grain elevators that will except infested corn is

only paying \$1.00 per bushel—less than half of what is needed to cover the farmer's production costs. Therefore, the farmer has two options—(1) sell the crop at discounted price of \$1.00 an acre or (2) leave it in the field to rot and collect about the same amount, if the farmer has Catastrophic Crop Insurance. Most farmers with aflatoxin in their corn above 20 billion parts per million are finding it impractical to even harvest. Those farmers who are lucky enough to have corn without aflatoxin will not be able to cover even half of their production costs due to low yields and low prices. What is the result of this situation? The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service recently estimated that corn farmers in one North Louisiana Parish will lose about \$154 per acre or about \$3.85 million this year.

Our cotton farmers just began their harvest last week, but the outlook is not much better. Cotton yields in Louisiana generally average about 800 to 1000 pounds per acre. As of last week, cotton yields have been averaging 100 to 650 pounds per acre, one third to one half of normal production yields. Also, the quality has been extremely poor due to the hot dry summer and will discount the price the farmer gets for his crop by several cents per pound. With production costs of cotton in Louisiana ranging from \$500 to \$600 per acre, it is estimated that the average cotton farmer will lose approximately \$131,000 this year.

Soybean harvest has also just begun. Yields thus far are less than 10 bushels per acre, which is down approximately 65% from normal. Most fields in North Louisiana are averaging about 4–5 bushels per acre. Also, because of the hot, dry weather, chemicals have not been preforming and weeds have been a tremendous problem. With the extreme low prices of soybeans and low yields, farmers in hardest hit areas can expect to lose approximately \$85 per acre or about \$42,500 this year.

These are just a few examples of how the major row crops will be impacted. In addition, our larger agriculture lending institutions are expecting very low repayments this year. One of the larger banks in the state says that of \$18 million in crop loans, they are expecting to be repaid only 30–35% of the outstanding loans. Another bank expects that 40–50% of the agricultural loans will not be totally paid this year. Not only will crop loans not be repaid, but outstanding bills for crop inputs such as chemicals, fertilizer and fuel may not be paid in full. In the words of one banker "spendable income will be down 75% of normal. This is the money used to buy clothing, household goods and for paying the utilities."

Mr. President, these are real examples of the economic hardships facing farmers, their families and the rural communities they support. Many farm families do not know what they are going to do in order to make it another year. Many may end up in the local un-

employment office. I hope that this Congress does not let this happen.

Farmers in Louisiana and other Southern states need disaster assistance, and they need it before the Congress adjourns. They need this assistance delivered in a manner that is fair. Thus, this relief should only be provided to those farmers with demonstrated crop losses. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in support of direct disaster payments to the thousands of farmers who provide us with three square meals a day. This source is so often taken for granted every day when we feed our families.

Mr. President, before I conclude my remarks, I would like to talk about some specific relief measures needed to address the 1998 crop losses in Louisiana and other Southern states that have lost a large portion of their crops due to the drought and associated disease. These measures include:

1. The Secretary should deliver direct disaster payments to compensate all farmers for 1998 crop losses through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

2. Payments should be based on actual farm yields using the past five years of actual production history, excluding the crop year with the lowest yields per harvested acre and any crop year in which the crop was not planted on the farm. Actual production losses should be adjusted because of quality losses caused by damaging weather and related conditions, including diseases such as aflatoxin. If no five year history is available, the Secretary should use the average county yields.

3. With respect to livestock producers, direct payments should cover the cost of feed, the establishment of supplemental pastures and other losses due to natural disasters, including livestock and poultry weight losses, poultry mortality and livestock milk production losses.

4. With respect to tree farmers, direct payments should cover the cost of replanting seedlings and cover production costs of pecan and peach farmers who suffered losses due to a natural disaster during the 1998 crop year.

5. Presently, any farmer who collected a Catastrophic Crop Insurance Payment (CAT) or Non-Insured Crop Insurance Payment (NAP) is ineligible for a low-interest Emergency Loan. This should be amended.

6. Also, there is presently a seven year limit on the amount of credit that can be extended through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). On an emergency basis, the Secretary of Agriculture should be granted the authority to waive the current limitation.

7. Finally, Mr. President, all the farmers that I have spoken with tell me the crop insurance program is not working. I think we do have some serious problems that can not be addressed in three weeks and should be revisited next year. However, one valid problem that can be addressed this year is to require USDA not to exclude from coverage approved existing planting methods. Currently, all broadcast soybeans planted in Louisiana are ineligible for crop insurance coverage due to the fact that they are seeded by broadcasting means such as aerial application. This is wrong and should be amended.

Mr. President, this concludes my remarks and I ask unanimous consent that the crop damages as reported by the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Louisiana State University (LSU) Agricultural Center's crop damage estimate for Louisiana

[August 14, 1998]

Total state reduction in farm income for the reporting Louisiana parishes:	
Corn	\$64,355,717
Silage	3,026,790
Cotton Lint	45,402,308
Seed	5,090,964
Soybeans	72,053,920
Rice	14,053,920
Sugar	44,828,210
Molasses	1,399,613
Sorghum	4,034,161
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Total crops	254,231,853
Sweet Potatoes	8,054,100
Commercial Vegetables ..	3,995,561
Est. Pine Seedling Mortality	10,000,000
Pasture	90,000,000
Hay	24,750,000
Additional damages reported as of September 1, 1998:	
Aflatoxin in Corn	29,000,000
Livestock	30,000,000
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Current estimated total	450,031,514

NEED FOR BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS ON FOREIGN POLICY AT A TIME OF DOMESTIC CRISIS

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, this is a time of serious political turmoil in the United States.

The House of Representatives is currently considering impeachment proceedings. The President of the United States has admitted to serious moral indiscretions.

The public is divided on what punishment should be meted out to a President who has performed such despicable and indefensible actions.

While the House of Representatives is considering impeachment the Senate is waiting to determine whether it may have to sit in judgment with respect to these actions.

Clearly this is a difficult time for the nation domestically.

It is a perilous time for the nation internationally.

We have four weeks left in this Congress and to date we have failed to address some critical foreign policy issues.

Notwithstanding that failure and the political disarray on the domestic front, there should be no disagreement as to the need to face up to these issues.

This challenge, and our unfinished business, is the subject of my remarks today.

Throughout our nation's history, Americans have understood that no matter what was happening in this country's internal political life, America's survival depends on presenting a strong, united front to the world. Now, in the middle of a domestic political crisis, we must overcome partisan dif-

ferences to focus on urgent matters in United States foreign policy.

Especially now, in the face of major world crises, we must not allow ourselves to be distracted from our task of protecting America's security, leadership, and credibility abroad.

With time running short in the Congressional session, the ability to reach out to find the necessary consensus which could permit our country to speak in one voice is threatened by the entire debate over the future of this President.

No matter how we feel about the actions of President Clinton and whether impeachment proceedings should begin in the House of Representatives, Bill Clinton is still President of the United States with constitutional responsibilities for the conduct of our foreign policy and national security.

We in the Congress share that constitutional responsibility and I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together and work closely with the President and his national security team to address these issues together.

The security threats facing us are urgent and complex: international terrorism; weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; nuclear weapons programs in India, Pakistan, and North Korea; a fragile Middle East peace; drug trafficking and international crime; the financial crises in Russia and Asia; and impending humanitarian disasters in Kosovo and the Horn of Africa.

RUSSIAN ECONOMIC CRISIS

The unfolding crisis in Russia, for example, could hold serious threats to the national economic and military security of the United States. An even greater danger than the economic meltdown is the threat of a total collapse of Russia's political system.

With the Yeltsin era about to end, the only thing worse than an economically paralyzed Yeltsin government would be a coup d'etat that installed an authoritarian government.

It takes little imagination to see the dangers of a new, extremist Russian regime that would have access to thousands of leftover Cold War missiles armed with nuclear warheads. Because of the deep structural problems in Russia's political and economic system, there is very little that the United States can do to turn this situation around quickly.

But with thousands of former Soviet nuclear weapons experts out of work and rogue states such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq eager to offer them paychecks, we must keep our eye on the first priority of preventing the collapse of Russian democracy along with the economy if we want to protect our own national security.

KOSOVO

In Kosovo, the Serbian special police are continuing their terrorist policy that has driven more than 300,000 Kosovo Albanians from their homes and into the forests and mountains. With the onset of the Balkan winter

only one month away, a humanitarian catastrophe of enormous proportions looms. The West must compel the Serbs to cease military operations at once and provide unrestricted access to international aid organizations.

The Administration must immediately formulate a policy on Kosovo and present it to the Congress so we can be united in strong action to address yet another Balkan tragedy.

IRAQ SANCTIONS POLICY

Iraq's decision last month to prevent U.N. inspections reminds us of the continuing threat posed by Saddam Hussein to our national interest. At that time, U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter resigned his post because he believed that the U.N. Security Council and the United States were unwilling to use force against Iraq to compel it to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors.

Ritter's resignation has forced both the Administration and Congress to decide on a clear Iraq policy: do we rely on the immediate, unilateral use of force to back U.N. inspections?

Do we seek to maintain consensus on the Security Council before using force? Do we abandon the threat of the use of force and rely on sanctions to contain Iraq? These are tough choices, but we need to make a decision and be prepared to stick with it. And we need to remember that big nations can't bluff.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Another test of United States leadership abroad is our continued support for the delicate peace process in the Middle East. My recent visit to the Middle East has reconfirmed my belief that both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership are committed to the success of the peace talks. It is important that Congress support the President's intensive efforts to revive a process that has remained stalled for much too long.

Continued drift in the peace process benefits no one but the terrorists and extremists.

INDIA/PAKISTAN

Equally critical is our support of the Administration's continued diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan. In the wake of their nuclear tests, the President was forced by existing sanctions law to impose sweeping economic penalties against these countries, even though this made resolution of the crisis more difficult.

The Senate quickly moved to repeal part of the sanctions law to make exceptions for food and other humanitarian supplies. The Senate Sanctions Task Force, which I co-chair with Senator MCCONNELL, also recommended changes in the existing sanctions regime to give the President flexibility in negotiating with India and Pakistan.

The Senate adopted these changes as an amendment to the Agricultural Appropriations bill. We need to complete